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The Forgiveness of Sins

BY HUGH THOMSON KERR

In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins. Colossians 1:14.

EVERYTHING depends upon our estimate of human nature. We cannot build until we are sure we are building upon the rock of truth. Before we can erect a new social structure, a new economic and spiritual order, a new family life, we must know the quality of the material with which we have to build. Is human nature dependable? Is it trustworthy? Will it always respond to the call of righteousness? Placed in a position of responsibility or obscurity, will it be true to the call of the highest? If human nature is trustworthy then Utopia may not be a dream. Suppose, however, human nature is tricky. Perhaps one man is trustworthy and his partner is not. Are there men who will betray a sacred trust? Will men and women deceive and lie? Will little children on the very threshold of innocence become deceptive? We must know how to answer these questions and how to estimate human nature. It is impossible to build a home or a social order or a political system out of material that is untrustworthy and defective.

What, then, is our interpretation of human nature? If we say it is good, we may deceive ourselves and build on the sand. If we say it is evil, we may cut the ground from under our efforts and fall back upon pessimism and despair. Is Mr. Wells' conclusion a safe resting place? "It was as if the Universe had put aside a mask it had hitherto worn and showed me its face—and it was a face of boundless evil." Is that true? Is human nature evil or is it a mixture of good and evil? What are the facts? When we stand up with other Christian men and women of all ages and of all lands and say "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," what do we mean? Are we sinners? What is sin and what

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is meant by forgiveness? What is our estimate of human nature?

MAN AS THE BIBLE SEES HIM

Suppose we start with the Bible. What is the Bible's estimate of human nature? Does it move out on the hypothesis that human nature is good and trustworthy? It has been said that the Bible is in reality a textbook on sin. On the very first page, at the very beginning, we are introduced to a Garden of Eden, a paradise of loveliness, an abode of beauty and delight, and immediately through it we see the strange shapes of sin creeping stealthily on their death-dealing mission. We see a man and a woman, yesterday innocent, seeking to hide from the presence of God because of their consciousness of wrongdoing. When we open the Book anywhere we discover men and women with a burden upon their souls. We hear a man, whose hands are red with his brother's blood, crying out, "My sin is greater than I can bear." The book of the Psalms, those immortal confessions of the human heart, could not be understood apart from this whole conception of deceptive humanity. Everywhere we hear the cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." We hear the response, after forgiveness has been experienced: "Blessed is the man whose sin is covered, whose iniquity is pardoned." On the last page we come again upon Paradise restored and regained, where the Tree of Life grows with its leaves which are for the healing of the nations. The Bible cannot be understood apart from the fact that human nature is deceptive and untrustworthy and tricky.

Suppose we start with Jesus. How did he look upon men? On the very first page of the first Gospel we come upon the words, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins." We find him facing up to men who sought to deceive him, who were insincere; and we read that he did not trust himself to them, for he knew what was in man and needed not that any should testify of man. We come upon him teaching his disciples to pray and we hear the familiar words, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." He explains to the people the mystery of his own mission, "I came to seek and to save that which was lost." At the end of his life, while the heavens are dark and he is dying upon the cross, he prays: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." It is not possible to disentangle his life from this ever potent fact of sin. Men need to be forgiven. They need to be saved. They need to be redeemed, and there is no purpose in his life or teaching or ministry if this fact is ignored or forgotten.

MAN'S SIN REFLECTED IN LITERATURE

Suppose we start with literature. I might speak of present-day fiction, much of which is of the earth earthy and which casts the spell of the sensuous over the deeds and motives of men. It is to the great literature, however, we go. We go to the greatest of English literature, to Shakespeare, and ask what is his conception of human nature and what would Hamlet or Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet mean if human nature is always to be trusted and there were no occasions and no circumstances "where civil blood makes civil hands unclean." We go to Germany and take the greatest of the Germans, Goethe, who pictures for us the tragic struggle of the soul with the invisible powers of evil. We go to Italy and ask of Dante, whom the people of Florence spoke of as "a man who had been in hell," what he thinks of human nature as he journeys through the inferno and purgatory to the heights of Paradise. We go to France and Victor Hugo will introduce us to the same struggle, where sin captures the stronghold of the soul and a redeemed convict fights for freedom—redeemed by the love that never fails. We come to America and Nathaniel Hawthorne will tell us the story of "the scarlet letter" and will reveal to us how sin can put its brand upon the soul, how it burns and blasts and blights the life that has denied the truth.

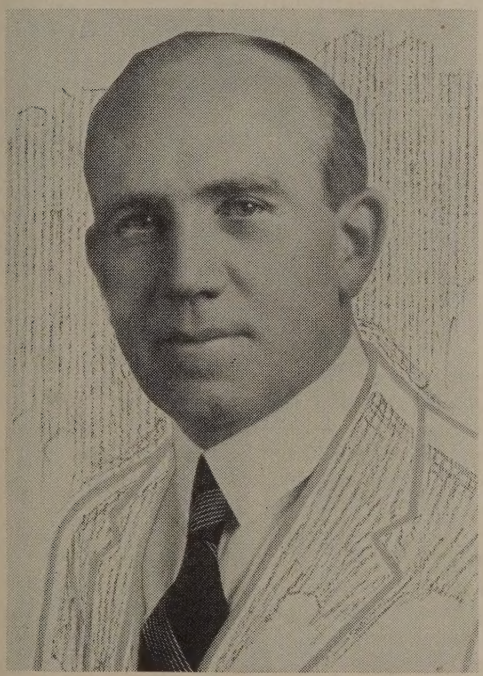
SAINTS ARE CONSCIOUS OF THEIR SIN

Turn where we may, we will come face to face with man's disappointment with himself, his undependable nature and the fact that where he is needed most and trusted most he fails. We seek to make laws in the interest of righteousness, conscious of the fact that man is drawn downward. The judge on the bench recognizes that the best of men in a crisis may fail. The physician sees human nature slipping and failing behind the disease which he seeks to cure. The social worker understands that behind poverty and destitution the shadow of sin is recognized. The minister meets it everywhere in his work. The banker is conscious of its presence as he handles the securities that pass from hand to hand.

But that is not where we come face to face with the deepest sense of failure and of sin. The worst of criminals may be the most callous. The grafter may always stand on the defensive and the libertine may be able to rationalize his wrongdoing. It is not among these that we find the consciousness of failure and the experience of sin. The sense of estrangement, of struggle, is found at its keenest in the conscience of the saint. It is the experience of the best people that things are not right with them and out of the literature of the saints have come the confessions which have brought us face to face with human nature at its best and its worst. It is this sentiment that finds expression in the hymn, "They who fain would serve Thee best are conscious most of wrong within." In the words of Carlyle, "There is ever a dark spot in our sunshine. It is even, as I said, a shadow of ourselves."

What, then, is the interpretation of this "dark spot"? For the name by which it is called matters little. The psychologist—and he has been opening up the innermost motives and instincts of the human soul—tells us that it is a remnant, a left-over, an inner conflict which continues because of our inheritance from the jungle. It is a call of the wild echoing the animal inheritance which is ours. It is a condition in the forward trend of evolution out of which we will grow. It is just a stage in the ascent of life, a sort of imperfection necessitated by the childhood of the race and the inheritance which we drag after us.

But that is not an adequate interpretation, for there is nothing sinful whatever about animal life. There is nothing sinful about the jungle. There is nothing sinful about immaturity. Animal passions are clean and pure and have nothing whatever to do with the deceptiveness and trickiness of human nature. The strange element that is in human nature does not belong to the physical but to the soul. It is something that concerns me. It is something I have said or done which I need not have said or done. It is an attitude that brings regret and remorse and shame so that the soul of man cries out, "My sin is greater than I can bear." It is an inner conflict of the soul in which there seems to be a dual personality that is not and cannot be at peace.



HUGH THOMSON KERR

St. Paul sets it before us in unforgettable words. He says: "I want to do what is right but I do wrong. I agree to God's law but I find another law which conflicts with that law and makes me a prisoner. I am a slave. I cannot understand my own actions. I do not act as I want to act. In fact I do what I do not want to do." It is because of this inner conflict that he cries out: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The soul has it within its own power to give consent or to withhold it. I could have said no but I said yes. I could have said yes but I said no. It is an inner act. It is something spiritual. The flesh and the body and the physical have nothing to do with it. It is the consent of my soul. It is my personal commitment.

It is this conflict which must be resolved. It is a conflict within the soul of every man. He can say yes or no. Saying no may resolve the conflict and bring some sort of satisfaction. A man who is committed to evil has no compunction of conscience and no conflict of soul. Saying yes to God resolves the conflict and brings a sense of peace. If the soul continues to say no, then it is committed to an anti-God attitude and in the end there is darkness and death. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." In Robert Louis Stevenson's story Mr. Hyde destroys Dr. Jekyll. It is the evil that crowds out the good. It is the flesh that destroys the spirit. The great Bible scholar, Dr. George Adam Smith, said that for that reason he could think of hell not as a place of fire but as a condition where the fire has burnt itself out and only the cold barren waste, where everything has turned to ashes, remains. When the soul says yes to God, there is a return to the soul's true life. Made in the image of God the human soul is restless till it finds God and only when the prayer is offered, "Not my will, but thine, be done" is there victory.

HOW CHRIST MAKES MAN WHOLE

Now this is the achievement of Christ. He came to save his people from their sins. He came to give them victory over themselves. He came to break down the middle wall of partition in our own lives and to create a new man, a new creature complete, united, whole. Across the ages we hear him say, "Wilt thou be made whole?" When we throw ourselves upon him, we become one in him. We are no longer a dual personality fighting within ourselves, divided, looking this way and that, living a Saturday and Sunday sort of life; but we become a personality that is at peace with itself, that has achieved victory and that is able to act righteously, to say yes to God. That is what we mean when we stand up and say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins."

Let us, however, look at that statement a little closer. What do we really mean when we say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins"? If it means that the consequences and penalties and punishments of sin are wiped out, then we will demur. That is not true to reality or to experience. The consequences of sin are what they are and will be what they are. The bitter word is spoken and cannot be recalled.

> Boys flying kites haul in their white winged birds,
> You can't do that way when you're flying words.
> Thoughts unexpressed may sometimes fall back dead;
> But God himself can't kill them when they're said.

The fatal poison is administered and it cannot be removed. The estrangement has taken place. The evil has been done.

> The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
> Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
> Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
> Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

The wild oats are sown. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Even the reformed drunkard has permanently hurt his children and probably ruined his own health. The restored prodigal comes back to live with his memories and his shame. It is true, indeed, that God can do much to restore a forgiven life to

health and happiness. The promise is that God will restore the years that the locusts have eaten, that he will repair the desolation of former generations. But the legacy and penalty of evil remain and the debts that have accumulated must at last be paid.

But forgiveness is something vaster, more wonderful, more amazing than that. Forgiveness has reference not to acts merely but to attitudes, not to particular deeds so much as to permanent relationships. True forgiveness speaks of renewed trust. It involves restoration to friendship. It brings about reconciliation. It restores confidence. It takes away all sense of estrangement and establishes a new relationship upon the rock foundation of trust and confidence.

FORGIVENESS INVOLVES FRIENDSHIP

It is forgiveness we hear spoken in the glad experience of Isaiah, where we find him in the presence of burning holiness crying out, "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." Then we read that the angel, touching his lips with the burning fire, said: "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven." Then we find restoration and renewal of trust, and in answer to the challenge "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" the prophet redeemed from sin responds: "Here am I; send me."

It is Jesus saying to the penitent prodigal, who had come home with the confession upon his lips "Father, I have sinned against Heaven," "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him." And the house is relighted, the music is heard again and the joy of complete understanding and fellowship has been restored.

When others have lost faith in us, when we have lost faith in ourselves, God trusts us. He bids us stand upon our feet and look the world in the face and in that forgiveness we find new hope, new confidence, even though there be memories that bless and burn.

There is a vast difference between the fear of consequences that follows sin and the friendship of reconciliation. What makes the difference? The gospel. It means that God gave himself to us. How greatly he gives himself to us in Christ, in his life, in his cross and in his living presence! "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end." It is the love of God that redeems, that awakens within us new desires, new hopes, new aspirations and a new response to holiness. In Owen Wister's book *The Virginian* the uncultured cowboy who had been lifted up by human love said: "It was neither preaching nor praying that made a better man of me, but one or two people who believed in me better than I deserved and I hated to disappoint them."

Well, that is the story of God's trust in us. The eternal God thinks better of us than we deserve, and we are pledged not to disappoint him. How do we know that? We know that when we stand in the presence of Jesus who gave himself for us and for our salvation. We know it when we stand beside his cross, from which he speaks forgiveness. He refuses the penalty. He shuts the door on enmity and opens the door to reconciliation, to the renewal of trust, and to a new confidence in ourselves and in God's eternal love.

The Fruits of Suffering

By Charles F. Banning

THE one problem which has troubled the minds of men more than any other, turned more faith to doubt, more joy to sorrow, more bliss to bitterness, blighted more ambition, driven more people from hope to despair, is the problem of suffering. Whenever a preacher says "God is good," some hearer with a heavy heart asks, "What about suffering?" Should he say that the universe is on the side of kindness and justice, some hearer will ask, "What about suffering?" When he says "God hears and answers prayer," the question comes again, "Yes, but what about suffering?"

Suffering is usually looked upon as man's worst enemy, to be escaped if at all possible. If we cannot escape it then we try to thwart it. If we cannot escape it or thwart it, then we try to bear it with what grace and patience we can muster. The Epicurean philosopher said, "Enjoy life while you can. It won't last." This is too shallow to be considered seriously. Eating and drinking do not make merry, and tomorrow we do not die.

The Stoic philosopher said: "Suffering is the lot of all. There is nothing we can do about it. You might as well grin and bear it." The man of today who shrugs his shoulders and talks about taking it on the chin, is a second cousin to the ancient Stoic. You can take it on the chin just so long and then your chin gets sore. Then you must find another solution to your problem.

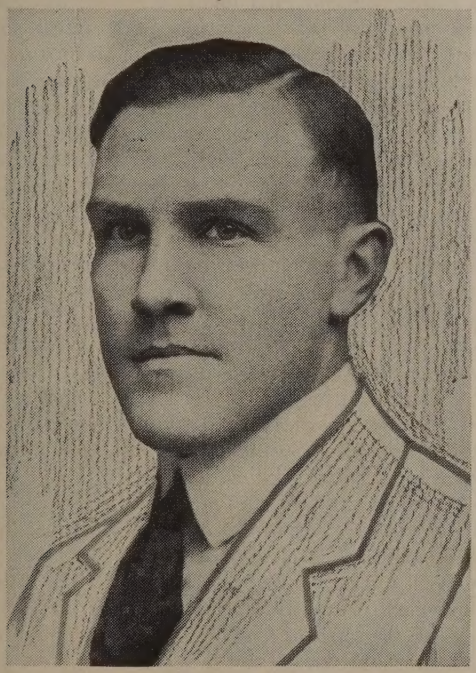
What answer can the Christian give to the problem of suffering? Millions of people are suffering in China and Europe. At least 20,000,000 in our own country are ill fed, ill clothed and ill housed. Our hospitals are full of suffering people and other millions are not able to get to hospitals. It is so easy and so natural to think of suffering in terms of trouble, sorrow, inconvenience, expense, loss and trial. That is one side of the picture, but there is another side. Insofar as we ignore or deny the other side of the picture, we ignore or deny the true meaning of the gospel of Christ. God is good. Christ died to save men. There is a law of compensation. This universe is friendly to goodness and truth. There is never a loss without a gain. So, this morning, let us think together of the gain that comes from suffering, of the compensations that come to us from the hour of trial, of the fruits of suffering.

I

Those of you who have been to the Pacific coast will remember the beautiful souvenirs on display everywhere made from the highly polished wood of the burl taken from the redwood tree. The wood is beautiful in color and grain. Whence comes this burl? It is the fruit of suffering, the result of a wound. Another tree has fallen against the redwood tree and bruised the bark. An animal has gnawed or bruised the tree. Perhaps lightning has struck or some parasite has attacked

the young redwood. As the years pass the tree takes that wound and makes a burl of it, a thing of beauty.

Now turn to your Bible. In the second chapter of Hebrews we read that Jesus reached the heights of his Saviorhood not by any easy means, not through escaping pain, not in spite of it; the record says he was made perfect through suffering. Do you notice that phrase "perfect through suffering"? Suffering evidently was a part of the refining process, a part of the divine plan. On the way to Emmaus that first Easter morning, you remember Christ opened the scriptures to the two who walked with him and led them to understand that "the Christ must suffer," must be made "perfect through suffering." It is said that Christ "for the joy



CHARLES F. BANNING

that was set before him, endured the cross." Paul, writing that classic of love to the Corinthians, said that one of the qualities of true love was the ability to suffer. "Love suffers long and is kind." James tells us to count it all joy when we fall into trials and difficulties, knowing that the trying of our patience brings strength. In all of these scripture references we are talking about the fruits of suffering. Like Christ, if we will, we may "learn by the things that we suffer."

We have recently been celebrating the birthday of America's most loved President, Abraham Lincoln. There are many incidents which illustrate the fruits of suffering in his life. Let me give just one. When he was running for president, an able man named Seward was opposed to him. Seward made a very unkind statement about Lincoln. He called him "a gorilla, the missing link." That hurt. Lincoln knew that he was big and awkward, that he lacked the poise and grace which wealth and training give to some men. To have an able man like Seward call him a gorilla cut deep. It must have wounded Lincoln's sensitive spirit greatly. Lincoln won both the nomination and election to the presidency. When he chose his cabinet, for secretary of state he chose a man named Seward. Someone reminded him that Seward had opposed him. Lincoln remembered what Seward had said about him, but he answered: "Yes, I know, but Seward is the best man we have for that position." When Lincoln lay dead, one of the men to visit the White House was Seward. He stood by Lincoln's body a long time, then turning away, with tears streaming down his face, he said, "There lies the greatest ruler of men the world has ever known." Like the suffering servant of Isaiah, Lincoln saw "the travail of his soul and was satisfied." That is what I mean by the fruit of suffering.

Up in New York state they raise thousands of bushels of apples. Occasionally there is an apple tree which gives all of its energy to producing wood and leaves but bears no fruit. When that happens the owner takes an ax and makes a deep gash in the trunk of the tree close to the ground. Almost always that gash produces a change. The next year that tree bears fine fruit. It is the fruit of suffering. Sometimes men are like that.

II

Why must men suffer? Please do not ask that question. No one can answer it. Often when this question comes to our minds we imagine what we would do if we were in God's place. If we were in God's place we would eliminate suffering, wouldn't we? Yes, and by our blundering we would destroy character and deprive the world of all the great souls who are made "perfect through suffering."

Some time ago this poem was found written on the wall of a hospital room. The author is unknown but its lesson is clear:

The cry of man's anguish went up to God,
"Lord, take away pain!
The shadow that darkens the world Thou hast made;
The close coiling chain
That strangles the heart; the burden that weighs
On the wings that soar—
Lord, take away pain from the world Thou hast made
That it love Thee the more!"

Then answered the Lord to the cry of the world:
"Shall I take away pain,
And with it the power of the soul to endure,
Made strong by the strain?
Shall I take away pity that knits heart to heart,
And sacrifice high?
Will ye lose all your heroes that lift from the fire
White brows to the sky?
Shall I take away love that redeems with a price?
Can ye spare from your lives that would cling unto mine
The Christ on his cross?"

Tragedy and suffering not only test character, they create, strengthen and develop character. Jesus learned by the things that he enjoyed and by the things that he suffered, but he was made perfect through suffering.

Oh yes, some suffering is easy to account for. If a

man gets drunk and drives his car against a tree, I know why he has broken bones. If a lad plays fast and loose with the moral law, I know why he suffers. If a home is built only on furniture and pleasure as its foundation, I know why it falls and why hearts are broken. If a man has wasted his money with gambling, I know why he is hungry. That is easy. It is the wages of sin.

But what about the innocent who suffer? Why do the righteous suffer? If a man is selfish why must his family suffer? Why must men suffer for doing their duty? Why is Martin Niemöller suffering in prison today? I do not know why. Some suffering is discipline. By suffering often a sinner is redeemed. Some suffering is vicarious. Two things I do know however. I know that God is good. A good parent would not cause his child needless suffering. A good parent sometimes causes his child suffering for his own good. A good God can be trusted.

The second fact that I am sure about is this: Suffering does one of two things to an individual. It either ruins him or it strengthens him. It makes or breaks him. When trouble comes, its victim becomes a bitter cynic or a stronger man.

III

A deeper sympathy and a more intelligent understanding are fruits that come only as a result of suffering. One who has been through the mill understands. Only one who has suffered loss knows the sorrow of a great loss. Charles W. Eliot was one of the greatest men America has produced. In 1869 he became president of Harvard University and served with great honor and success for forty years. Dr. Eliot had a handicap. One whole side of his face was terribly disfigured by a birthmark. One day he was walking down a street when he came across some boys teasing one of their companions because he had a birthmark on his face. Driving the others away, Dr. Eliot put his arm around the lad, smiled and said: "Look, son, my face is marred too." That deeper sympathy and understanding was one of the fruits of suffering.

One of the most popular branches of study today is psychology. One phrase we hear tossed back and forth, whether people know much psychology or not, is the phrase "integration of personality." It means the integrating or uniting of all the parts of our being into a unit. It means the weaving of all the strands of life into a single pattern. One distinct part of every life is suffering. It is the common lot of all. As long as we resent it, struggle against it, allow it to embitter us, or so long as our only reaction is self-pity, then we cannot have an integrated personality. Sooner or later we must come to terms with pain. It must be woven into the pattern of life. How foolish it is for man to suffer and to receive no blessing from it—no fruit of suffering! Whatever a lion eats becomes lion. Whatever a serpent eats becomes serpent. Whatever experiences we have are assimilated and become a part of us. Why not make that unpleasant experience, loss, disappointment or sorrow a part of your armor? Do not let it go until you have received its blessing.

From one of our hospitals some time ago a woman came, following an operation, knowing that she would never see again. With a smile she said to her sons: "I'll show you how to handle trouble. The way you take it is the only thing about it that is important." No wonder people used to go to her home to catch some of her contagious spirit. She had the fruit of suffering. She had received its blessing.

An ancient fable tells us of a man whose life was being ruined by a veiled figure. The man attained wealth and the veiled figure robbed him. He achieved fame and the veiled figure turned it into disgrace. This veiled figure robbed him of his sleep at night through fear, spoiled the taste of his food, embarrassed him before company, and finally on his wedding day, when happiness lay before him, this veiled figure shouted out: "I forbid this marriage. This man is unworthy." Finally the man became so wretched that he sought the veiled figure, tore away the veil, and the face of his enemy was revealed. It was his own face. He was his own enemy. Whenever sorrow, trouble or difficulty makes you bitter, it is not the sorrow or suffering which is at fault. You have not met it as you should. The answer is within you.

Sorrow and trouble come to us all. They make some of us bitter, fill some with self-pity, rob some of faith, hope and courage. The same cross brings added strength to someone else. The same sorrow that paints the future so black for one person, makes the background for a bright future for another. Unless you get the fruit of suffering, you will find yourself spending the rest of your life dropping empty buckets into empty wells and drawing nothing up. Say rather, "I will not let you go until you bless me."

How can we gather the fruit of suffering? I am told by chemists that the way to make oxygen and nitrogen is to pass a strong current of electricity through water which is slightly acid. When your life becomes bitter, let the spirit of Christ surge through your soul. Faith, hope and courage will then come to you.

What Would Happen?

WHAT would happen if our people, recognizing their sinning, would nevertheless pause at noon each day to pray, honestly, for the peoples who suffer tyranny; pray even for the tyrant—not that we tolerate his tyranny, but that God would save him from his sins? Then, in the act of prayer, we should call upon God to forgive us because, when we had the power and the privilege of cooperating with growing democracies, we put upon these youthful countries burdens grievous to be borne. If in that prayer we could dedicate ourselves to the reordering of this world on a just basis, what might happen?

DAVID LAWRENCE.

THE Beatitudes are in reality Be-attitudes; they are attitudes that come not from doing, but from being.

WILLIAM LYON PHELPS.

Deepening Our Faith in God's Love and Care

By James Gordon Gilkey

The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath thee are the Everlasting Arms. Deuteronomy 33:27.

WHO was the author of those words? What did they mean to him? As far as modern scholars can discover, the author was a patriotic Hebrew poet who was writing about the year 750 B. C. He was convinced that the Hebrew nation was God's favorite, and that God helped the Hebrew nation in every possible way. In time of war God fought on the side of the Hebrews, and thus enabled them to conquer their enemies. When this poet wrote "Underneath thee are the Everlasting Arms" the word "thee" did not refer, as it does with us, to an individual. It referred to the Hebrew nation. You will see this clearly if I reread part of the Scripture lesson you heard a few moments ago.

> O happy Israel! There is no nation like you,
> Victorious through the power of God!
> God is your shield and your sword
> Till your foes fawn before you
> As you march across their hills.
> The Eternal God is your refuge,
> And underneath you are the Everlasting Arms.

But as the centuries passed, men outgrew the belief that God has chosen one nation as his favorite. They came to realize that God is interested in all nations, and furthermore that his love reaches beyond groups to the individuals who compose the groups. These new ideas had become common by the first century of our era, and they were accepted by Paul and the early Christians. If Paul had quoted the old words "Underneath thee are the Everlasting Arms," he would undoubtedly have said that the word "thee" referred to an individual, and that the individual might be either a Jew or a Gentile. But did Paul believe that God's love and care embrace all individuals? Had the notion of divine favorites vanished completely from his mind? It had not. Paul believed that God had chosen a certain group of individuals—some Jews, some Gentiles—and had then made this composite company the object of his favor. Paul said that these individuals were the men and women whom God had "called," and that together they formed a group known as "the elect." Around "the elect" God placed his love and protection: meantime the remainder of the human race moved helplessly toward its doom.

These theories are clearly suggested in one of the most familiar verses in the New Testament. Writing to the Romans about the year 55, Paul said, "We know that all things work together for good—to them that love God, and are called according to his purpose." Notice that all things do not work together for good in the case of everyone. Only in the case of "the called" or "the elect" does God make everything finally prove beneficial. Only under a chosen few does God place the Everlasting Arms.

WHOM DOES GOD HELP?

During the latter half of the nineteenth century Christian thought on this point began to change. Intelligent people began to reject Paul's theory that the human race is divided into two such groups, and reject Paul's theory that God ignores the non-elect. Christians began to say that God loves every human being, and that God is always ready to help every human being. The only barrier to God's help is a deliberate will-toward-evil on the part of an individual. When a man does wrong he cannot receive God's help, and as long as he continues to do wrong he continues to deprive himself of God's help. But when he starts doing right, then God's love and aid enfold him—and do so irrespective of his race, his creed, his color or even his previous moral record. Thus when a modern Christian repeats the old words "Underneath thee are the Everlasting Arms," he claims that the word "thee" refers to any and every individual who is trying to do right. Every such individual is (a modern Christian believes) the object of the divine love and the divine aid.

The change from Paul's belief to our modern belief began to be apparent during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and a poem which Whittier wrote in 1865 shows clearly the evidences of the change. Whittier had heard some preachers discussing the distinction between the elect and the non-elect, and had heard them say that God loves the first group but hates the second. In protest against this teaching—and incidentally it was Paul's teaching—Whittier wrote these superb stanzas:

> I trace your lines of argument,
> Your logic linked and strong
> I weigh as one who dreads dissent,
> And fears a doubt as wrong.
>
> But still my human hands are weak
> To hold your iron creeds,
> Against the words you bid me speak
> My heart within me pleads.
>
> The wrong that pains my soul below
> I dare not throne above:
> I know not of His hate—I know
> His goodness and His love.
>
> I know not what the future hath
> Of marvel or surprise,
> Assured alone that life and death
> His mercy underlies.
>
> I know not where His islands lift
> Their fronded palms in air,
> I only know I cannot drift
> Beyond His love and care.
>
> And Thou, dear Lord, by whom are seen
> Thy creatures as they be,
> Forgive me if too close I lean
> My human heart on Thee!

Now suppose you have followed this hurried account of the development of the idea of God's love. Suppose

you agree that our modern belief—that God's Everlasting Arms surround every human being who is trying to do right—is truer than either of the beliefs which preceded it. How can you win that belief yourself? How can you win it so securely that you will not lose it when disaster overtakes you or those you love? Those are the questions I propose to discuss today. And in all the realm of religion there are no questions more fundamental, more significant, than these.

There are, so it seems to me, three definite ways by which you and I can strengthen our faith in God's love and care, deepen our sense of the Everlasting Arms. The first two of these ways can be stated easily and rapidly. The third way will require more time and care.

UNDESERVED DISASTERS

To begin with: If we seek to strengthen our faith in God's love and care, we must study the modern explanation of undeserved disasters. Such disasters are not the work of an Evil Being named Satan. There is no such Evil Being: there never was such an Evil Being. The ancient belief in Satan was, like the ancient belief in a flat earth, entirely mistaken. Neither are undeserved disasters the work of God. God is not trying to hurt us. God is not trying to make trouble for us. How could a kindly God have such aims? Undeserved disasters have an entirely different origin. They are incidents or accidents accompanying the vast and complex world-process going on all about us. Here are some two billion human beings, crowded together on a tiny sphere circling tirelessly through space. Each of those human beings is the descendant of the animals who, millions of years previously, tenanted that sphere. Some human beings have gained an adequate control over the impulses they inherited from their animal ancestors: other human beings have not. Some have acquired the power to think clearly and steadily: others have not. In such a tangled situation is not a vast amount of stupidity and sheer wickedness inevitable? It is. From that stupidity and wickedness spring many, perhaps most, of the undeserved disasters we see about us. Furthermore, within the vast and complex world-process are hundreds of small, subsidiary processes. Occasionally they combine to produce, apart from any human activity, cruel disasters. Thus a succession of heavy rains sweeps over a broad valley. All the streams in the valley are filled to overflowing, and presently they pour torrents of water into the river in the middle of the valley. Down that river a flood moves resistlessly, and eventually inundates the city built at the mouth of the river. For weeks afterward contaminated food supplies spread disease and death throughout the near-by region. Did God deliberately engineer those disasters? Did God want them to happen? Certainly not! They are the result of a fortuitous combination of processes operating within the framework of the vast and complex world-process.

You ask why God established a world which contains such possibilities of disaster. No one can answer that question entirely. All we can say is that the vast world-process—cruel though it often proves to be—slowly carries out the purpose for which, apparently, it was established. It develops, and develops with astonishing effectiveness, the finer powers latent within human nature. You wonder how a modern Christian can believe in the Everlasting Arms when the world is filled with undeserved suffering? But such suffering is not the work of God. It is quite as distressing to him as it is to us. Through it his love and help shine in never-failing splendor, as your love and help shine through the misfortunes which occasionally invade your home. "The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath thee are the Everlasting Arms." We Christians believe those words are true. We believe they are true in spite of the undeserved disasters which fill our world.

DEATH BUT AN INCIDENT

A second effort we must make if we seek to strengthen our faith in God's love and care is this. We must study the modern explanation of death. Death is not a disaster brought on human beings by Satan. There is no such creature as Satan, and there never was such a creature. Neither is death a punishment, or even a discipline, sent on us by God. Could a God who is kind deliberately plan to kill human beings? Our modern explanation of death differs sharply from these earlier explanations. We regard death as a normal, inevitable, relatively unimportant incident in the life cycle of every living creature. It is nothing to puzzle over, nothing to worry about. It is part of the total scheme-of-things, one element in God's will for every form of life. Every living creature begins its cycle of development in a certain way, passes through the predetermined stages in that cycle, and then undergoes the process of disintegration which we call "death." What happens after death? We do not pretend to say what happens in the case of the non-human forms of life. Their ultimate destiny is to us an insoluble riddle. But in the case of the human forms of life we believe that conscious existence and orderly growth continue, continue forever. They continue (so we believe) under the care and protection of the Eternal God. The Everlasting Arms which surround us during life surround us during the episode of death, and then continue to surround us in that new phase of our endless evolution to which death brings us.

CAN LOVE DECREE DEATH?

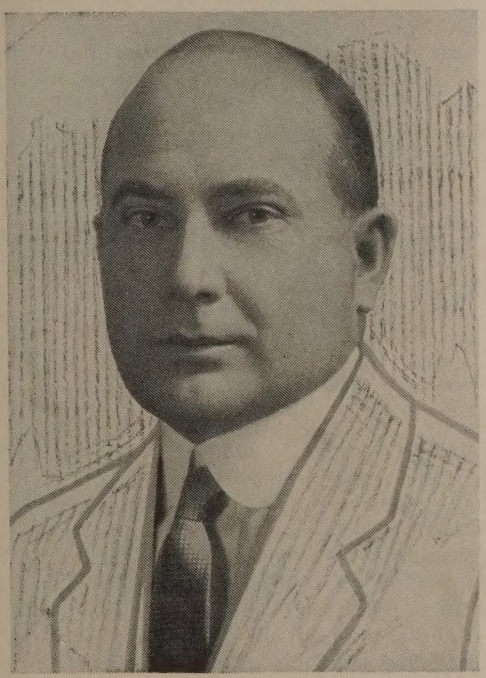
You wonder how anyone can believe in God's love and care when he sees human beings dying all about him? You wonder how he can believe in the Everlasting Arms when his own death is inevitable? Listen.

> Death is only an old door
> Set in a garden wall:
> On gentle hinges it gives
> When the thrushes call.
>
> Along the lintel are green leaves,
> Beyond—the light lies still:
> Very weary and willing feet
> Go over that sill.
>
> There is nothing there to trouble any heart,
> Nothing to hurt at all:
> Death is only a quiet door
> In a garden wall.

The third thing we must do if we seek to strengthen our faith in the Everlasting Arms is, as I said a few moments ago, somewhat harder to describe. Perhaps on this final point you will let me speak out of my own experience and tell you frankly what I myself do when my faith in God's love and care begins to waver. I force myself to recall four experiences which come day after day to thousands of normal people. What now are those experiences?

'IT IS WELL WITH THE GOOD'

The first is the experience of discovering, everywhere in the world, processes which are friendly to human beings, or which can be made friendly to human beings. Probably the most obvious of these processes is the healing process which quietly repairs the damage disease and accident inflict upon us. It is this healing process which doctors and surgeons study, and with which they cooperate. An equally helpful process observable in our world is the growth process which brings the harvests of October out of the seeds of April. No one entirely understands this process, but everyone knows it can be utilized. When it is utilized it produces for human beings the food which they must have in order to live. Or consider the mysterious process which maintains the balance between the different parts of our body, between the different processes operating within our body, and between the many different parts and the many different processes found in the realm of nature. Scientists give long and complicated names to this balance-maintaining process, but no one really understands it. All we know is that there is something in us and in our world which perpetually keeps things in proportion, and so makes possible the continuance of life as we know it. Perhaps the most mysterious process of all is the one which, as the slow centuries pass, makes Truth and Beauty and Goodness survive while their opposites perish. After a lifetime spent in the study of history James Froude, the English historian, wrote: "Somehow this world of ours is built on moral foundations. That is the lesson of history. In the long run it is well with the good, and ill with the wicked."



JAMES GORDON GILKEY

What does the presence in our world of these strange and significant processes mean? Does it not mean that there is, below the surface of things, an Unseen Power which is friendly toward intelligently directed human effort?

The second experience which comes to multitudes of normal people is this. In their moments of need these individuals find, almost invariably, that help reaches them. Sometimes the help comes from another human being, a friend who subsequently confesses he felt impelled to do what he did at the time he did and in the way he did. Sometimes the help which comes is traceable, not to a human being, but to an extraordinary turn of events. A doorway of opportunity is mysteriously opened. An almost unendurable burden is quietly lifted. A problem which seemed insoluble is suddenly solved, and solved in a way which no one anticipated. Sometimes the help which reaches us comes from mysterious depths within our own nature. Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote: "The great crises in men's lives are not births and marriages and funerals, but quiet afternoons at the turn of the road when new thoughts and new impulses fill the heart."

All of us know the experience to which Emerson refers. In our moments of need a new courage, a new strength, a new quietness, a new insight emerge within us. These new powers, welling up from mysterious depths within our own nature, enable us to face life and make a new start on the hard journey of the years. What does this experience of receiving help—receiving it from one source or another—mean? Does it not mean that the Unseen Power which has filled our world with potentially friendly processes is itself using those processes to bring us aid in our moments of need?

LIVES ACCORDING TO PATTERN

The third experience I mention is the experience of discovering, within our own past life, an indubitable element of pattern. Most of us here this morning have had this experience, though probably we do not discuss it with other people. During a certain period in our career—the years between fifteen and twenty-five, for example—the events which took place in our little world seemed to have no relationship with each other. They were like fragments of vari-colored marble which might become an ordered mosaic, but which showed no indication of forming a pattern. Then, as we completed that period in our life and looked back upon it, a significant grouping of experiences began to be apparent. We were forced to conclude that the events of that period had been—to a certain degree at least—a preparation for the life-period which followed.

Dr. Coffin, president of Union Seminary, gives this moving account of this familiar experience. "When we survey our own past the feeling is borne in upon us that Someone wiser than we are has had a hand in our career. We may not be able to prove the fact to others, and we may not care to try because of the intimate nature of the situations involved. But for ourselves we cannot escape the feeling that we were secretly prepared for tasks as yet years in the future, that we were intentionally thwarted here and intentionally encouraged there, and that some of the best things which came to us came without our own effort or even directly in spite of it."

You say that such experiences are infrequent? You are wrong. Scores of the people here this morning could tell you of such experiences if they chose to do so.

The fourth experience which comes to multitudes of people is closely connected with the third. These individuals discover that certain wise things they once said, certain kind things they once did, proved of crucial importance in the lives of other people. These individuals themselves soon forgot what they said and did, but their associates remembered. Their associates not only remembered but, as a result of those words and deeds, reconstructed their lives. This experience of exerting unconsciously a significant influence-for-good is the theme of a poem which many of you will remember:

One never knows
How far a word of kindness goes,
One never sees
How far a smile of friendship flees,
Down through the years
The deed forgotten reappears.

We cannot say
Whose lips are praising us today,
We cannot tell
Whose prayers ask God to guard us well.
For influence lives
Beyond the memory of him who gives.

"The deed forgotten reappears." Why does it reappear? Why is our world made in such a way that influences-for-good reach out so far on this side and that, and reach down so far into the future? Can it be that the Friendly Power at the heart of things thus makes a significant use of our occasional words of wisdom and our occasional deeds of kindness?

WHAT FAITH IN GOD MEANS

Now to some of us these four experiences in combination have a very definite meaning. Their meaning is, we believe, this. At the heart of things there is a Friendly Power that we Christians call "God." God has filled our world with processes which help us, or which can be made to help us. God uses these processes himself, and through them brings us aid. God seeks to order the lives of the human beings who live at their best, and under certain circumstances he succeeds in doing so. God takes the finest things we say and do, and makes them permanent influences for good in the lives of others. God does not give us immunity from disaster, nor does he save us from the universal experience of dying. But he does do these other things for us. To him we can turn as to a great refuge. On him we can rest when we grow tired and afraid. This is our Christian faith. This is the very heart of our religion. Can I state our faith in simpler language? I can. "The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath thee are the Everlasting Arms."

What would that faith—faith in the unwavering love and care and help of God—mean in your life? Listen. "When a man finally learns to commit to God his whole being—his physical self, his mental self, the hunger of his heart, all his plans and hopes and fears and needs—he gains a strength great enough to meet victoriously the challenge of daily life. He imbeds himself in God, the central fact of the universe. He puts his sick soul in contact with the ultimate source of all healing. He finds the inward peace which the world cannot give, and which all the tragedies in the world can never quite take away."

Discerning the Way of God

By Albert W. Palmer

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Matthew 5:8.

THIS is not a postponed beatitude! If you think of is as a prediction of what may happen some far-off day in heaven you lose the tang of its reality. No, it is here and now that the pure in heart see God!

Sometimes this is relatively easy. The poet took a day to search for God and although he did not find him in conventional places he did suddenly discover God's footprint in the sod—"Just where one scarlet lily flamed," and heard his voice in the thrush's twilight song. Here is the testimony of a modern poet, Una W. Harsen:

The worshipers had gone, and through the open door
I glimpsed an altar on which candles burned,
Cool and withdrawn, far from the traffic's roar.
At first I envied those who could be sure
Of finding God within that holy place.
Then I remembered that I just had seen
The flaming sunrise from a lofty hill;
Last evening when the weary world was still
Rapt I had viewed the sunset's fiery glow
And, gazing on the darkening heavens afar,
Had seen a radiant angel stoop to light
The shining candle of the evening star.
Then quiet filled my soul, and deep content.
Since the whole world is God's bright tenement,
I need no altar and no sacred shrine.
All ground is hallowed, every spot divine.

But there are more difficult days. It is not always so easy to see God. We are not always poets. Life is a pilgrimage, as John Bunyan noticed, and the pilgrimage includes the Slough of Despond, the valley

where Apollyon offers battle, and Vanity Fair as well as the Palace Beautiful and the Delectable Mountains. Sometimes God seems very far away, while Giant Despair can be heard rattling his keys. Can you see God in darkened days, when there are no scarlet lilies, no thrush in the evening woods? That is what people need to know as they contemplate Europe and Asia, the unemployed, the city slum—yes and the rural slum, too. Is God to be found in critical, evil, desperate situations or is he only a fair-weather divinity conjured up by poets on starlit nights in spring?

This is my faith: that God is always in the concrete

Albert W. Palmer

situation and if our hearts are only pure enough we shall find him there!

After all, life is just a series of concrete situations. We pass from one to another with bewildering kaleidoscopic rapidity: new experiences, choices, conflicts of opinion, temptations, jar of personalities, betrayal, weariness or exaltation, victory or frustration, crises. And in every one of them a switch is thrown! We emerge from each new crisis in some way different in mood or mind than when we entered it.

HOW LIFE ADVANCES

Graham Taylor once said with penetrating insight concerning his own life: "I did not devise my way: I discerned it." What he meant was that, as a boy, he did not plan to found the Chicago Commons; as a young minister in Hartford, he did not himself propose to come to Chicago and become a professor of social ethics in a theological seminary; when he became such a professor, he did not say to himself: "Go to, now, I will start a magazine which shall blossom out into the *Survey-Graphic* and I will start a school of social studies which shall become the Graduate School of Social Service Administration in the University of Chicago." True, he did all those things. But they were not foreseen or planned in advance. They grew up out of the events of life as he wrestled with this or that concrete situation. For Graham Taylor, God was revealed and God's will was discovered in the struggle with life.

I think that is where we shall find God, too, if we find him at all. Life is a series of recurrent crises. Life has a way of coming to judgment at more or less regular intervals. People reap what they have sown. They write their little treaty of Versailles—and a little later reap a new world war! But crises are more than judgment days. Crises are creative. The hope of God for the future is in them, not only his condemnation of the past. Out of life's crises new and often surprising and unexpected beginnings may emerge.

GOD IN A TRAGEDY

Take Paul's conversion, for example. The martyrdom of Stephen was certainly a crisis situation. Think how it must have looked to Stephen as the stones and curses of his ecclesiastical executioners hurled about him. How dark the day! Prejudice, reaction, blind conservatism, stupidity, repression, cruelty and ruthless violence had won! For Stephen there was no hope save in the vision of a deathless Christ beyond this present world. To Stephen's friends the situation was scarcely better: defeat, exile, disheartenment, was all it seemed to hold. But, as we today look upon that crisis, how different it appears! We can see God present even in this tragedy. A young man named Saul was standing by observing, listening, thinking. A few days later on the Damascus road the words of Stephen, his courage, his faith, are to rise up within Paul's soul and cause a revolution. A new leader is born full-grown into the Christian faith. Churches will be founded, epistles written, seas traversed, prisons endured and a transforming influence sent out across the centuries and around the world! God was in the tragedy, after all!

There are three ways of meeting the concrete situation in life. The first and most obvious way is to exploit it. Get everything out of it you can: pleasure, money, fame, escape from ennui, blame or drudgery. *Carpe diem!* Get yours while the getting's good! But sometimes we can't exploit the events of life, we are baffled by them. . . . The second reaction, then, is one of resentful frustration. The situation leaves us peevish and complaining, with a grudge against life. This is the way of defeatism, cynicism and despair. . . . But there is a third way. Whatever the event, we can seek to discern God in it. That is what Graham Taylor did. He discerned not only his way but God's way. If you ever come face to face with God, depend upon it, it will be in some particular event.

WHERE IDEALS MAY LEAD ASTRAY

A very impressive statement of this is found in Henry Nelson Wieman's article in the "How My Mind Has Changed" series published in the *Christian Century*.

He says: "Ideals . . . can never cover the riches of value to be found in each concrete situation. . . . Life under the absolute control of highest ideals might be perfectly moral, if you define moral living as such idealistic conduct. But from the Christian standpoint it is a life of sin because it is missing and excluding the unpredictable exigencies and riches of the concrete situation wherein the living God operates."

But not everybody finds or seeks to find God in the concrete situation. It is now that our text comes back with enriched and deeper meaning. Who are they who discern God amid the tumult of events? The pure in heart! They shall see God where others never dream that he is present. And who are the pure in heart? Not merely the guileless or the goody-goody. Nothing so spineless as that! Jesus, who knew his Old Testament, must have had in mind when he uttered the sixth beatitude these words of the twenty-fourth Psalm:

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto falsehood,
And hath not sworn deceitfully.

Who are the pure in heart? The morally upright and the seekers after truth! Humble, undivided loyalty to goodness and truth is purity of heart. Such minds discover and experience God in situations where selfish, conceited, corrupt, deceitful, superficial persons pass him by.

CAN ONE SEE VISIONS TODAY?

Take, for example, this present terrible world situation. You can exploit it. Use it, as many are, for making money, for excitement and entertainment, for self-congratulation. Or you can be baffled by it. Some are, and sink into a bitter cynical attitude toward life or a nerveless defeatism. But you need not do either of these things in face of the current situation. You can discover God in it! You can see God rebuking the selfishness and greed of nations, revealing again the futility of war, the nobility and heroism of humble and inarticulate common people, calling men to envision and create a cooperative world order with liberty and justice for all. Possibly some young Saul of Tarsus, yes, perhaps thousands of Sauls from many different lands, are looking on at the folly and futility of the world's present martyrdom. In the desert road that lies ahead, they will see a vision and discern the will of God for a world of order, justice, brotherhood and peace.

Tennyson said that Galahad's strength was as the strength of ten because his heart was pure. But what Jesus said was vastly greater: he said that the pure in heart should see God! What do we need more to be able to see in these dark days?

THE WEAKNESS of Christianity has often been laid to the inefficiency of its organizations, to the contradictions of its creeds, to the disunity of its churches. The real weakness of our religion lies in the failure of the human spirit.—CHARLES H. HEIMSATH.

Thou Hast Set Before Us Life

By HOLLAND F. BURR

I have set before you life. Deuteronomy 30:19.

THERE is so much a minister would like to do on Easter Sunday morning, for he recognizes so many different kinds of people in his congregation with so many different kinds of needs.

I

This is the day when the church celebrates its faith in immortality. Easter never comes without my wondering what sort of an impression it makes on people who never enter the church's doors on any other day. How can they get a balanced view of what the church represents? For those of us who are of the church, Easter is but one of many days—a high day to be sure, but not the only day. There are other days with other emphases which help to complete the picture of what the church is about. But if you never come except at Easter, you must get the idea that the church's interest is primarily if not wholly in another world.

Your interest is in this world—in whether Roosevelt will run again, in what Congress will do about the budget, in getting ahead in life, in your home, your children, your community. What idealism you have is devoted to making this a better world. You are working, let us say, for a sounder administration of relief funds or a new city charter. Or you are interested in crippled children, or in boys' work, or in reducing juvenile delinquency. Books, music, art and the amenities of a cultured civilization make their appeal to you. It is this world that claims you. There are so many things to be done. So many amazing things keep occurring that you wish you could live long enough to see how it all turns out.

Now, in the midst of this absorbing world, to thrust in talk of another is an intrusion. And to have anyone tell you that your supreme concern should be about your destiny in another world seems presumptive, to say the least. You feel like saying with Thoreau when, on his death bed, a friend sought to turn his mind to things of eternity: "One world at a time, brother; one world at a time!" Or you feel like that high school boy who wrote some time ago in the *American Magazine:* "This life is all I'm sure of and I want to enjoy it." So you come to church once a year, but your attitude is probably one of pity or of patronage, certainly of detachment from the historic institution to which now and again you pay formal respect. How little you know the church!

But those who are like you in this respect are not the only ones I have in mind this Easter Sunday morning. There are others I see oftener whom I carry on my mind today. First, there are those who find Easter a hard day because it brings to them with fresh poignancy their burden of sorrow over someone dearly beloved whom they have lost awhile. Second, there are those who are afraid of death, who refuse to face it, or who,

facing it, are terrorized by it. Third, there are those who are discouraged. I find no fewer of them this year than in other years. Life is so full of hopes that have faded. Fourth, there are the young people, whose day is coming! What do they think of the world into which they have been born? What are they going to do with it? What are they going to do with themselves? What challenge in terms of the ideals of Jesus can galvanize them by its word of action?

Fifth, there are those who have joined the church this morning, some young, some older. What may this public step in acknowledgment of their allegiance to Jesus mean to them? Sixth, there are those with intellectual difficulties, especially difficulties about the Easter

HOLLAND F. BURR

story of Jesus' resurrection. It does not sound scientifically credible. How can one believe in the resurrection of the body? And if one discards "the resurrection of the body" from the creed, shall he still retain "the life everlasting"? Certainly there are plenty of people whose intellectual doubts bar them from believing in any sort of immortality, no matter in how immaterial a form it may be conceived. And still further, I have in mind those men—they are usually men—who think the church is just what it was in their childhood, narrow, creed-bound, intellectually impossible, hypocritical, choked with a close and stuffy atmosphere into which no fresh breath of pure and life-giving air has come since the days of their grandfathers.

If I could speak separately today to each of these, I would have a word to say to each so important that not to say it is to forego an opportunity and a privilege highly to be prized. But obviously this cannot all be done. For example, on the question of the resurrection: The study class and lecture hall are the places for its discussion. There one can bring to bear all that reverent biblical research discloses and see how the newer Protestantism at last affords our minds a glad release both from superstition and from doubt. That cannot be undertaken in these brief moments here.

II

Indeed, as I face you here this morning, I find myself not in the mood of argument, but in the mood of reverence. All about us life is bursting into flower with the miracle of spring. What is life, that can take the substance of a clod and change it into a lily? Something we call life has laid hold on non-living matter to make the cell, and then has gone on to build up cells into those wonderful structures we call bodies, with unity, balance and interrelationship between the parts. Something we call mind has found a dwelling-place in bodies, and persons have come into being. Through it all one increasing purpose runs. That Spirit which set in motion the whirling nebulae and the energies of atom and of cell kindled also the mind of Plato, the imagination of Shakespeare, the soul of Beethoven, and now reveals itself in its highest manifestation in the heart of Christ.

Will you go with me one step further? Professor Arthur H. Compton some time ago, after discussing some of the arguments against immortality, declared: "There is, however, an equally tenable view which points toward the opposite conclusion. This is that the evolutionary process is working toward the development of conscious persons, rather than toward the development of physical organisms. On this view we might reasonably expect nature to preserve at all costs the living souls which it has evolved at such labor."

Here is a clue that tallies with what religion has long taught. If it be true that that which inspires the flesh, that which is enmeshed in the body here on this earthly plane, at last may find itself free from the encumbering body—if it be true that "there is no death" for the spirit, "what seems so is transition"—then wonder and reverence mingle with solemnity and awe. Such is "the soul's invincible surmise." And Easter is the celebration of the most tremendous fact that yet has dawned upon the mind of man—the fact that the spiritual world is the real world, and that in the world of the spirit man himself has a place and share. I pause in awe before the thought. Here is a truth too solemn, too holy for our small minds fully to grasp.

III

If this be true, then one would turn to the highest source for evidence of it. It is Jesus, the greatest person, the first-born among many brethren, who "has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Reading the Gospels, you do not have to wait until the last chapter to find it. It does not burst suddenly before men with dazzling splendor on Easter morning.

It is in his teachings through and through. Jesus does not argue for immortality: he assumes it. He does not confine his thought about any person to the mere

fragment of time measured by this earthly life. A longer time and a wider sphere must be considered if we are really to know what God is and what man is. Jesus was not unaware of the physical demands of man's existence. He was not blind to the requirements of social righteousness. Where does humanitarianism receive its charter? In teachings like the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Where is the law of social justice most clearly enunciated? In Jesus' commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The fountain and source of moral idealism is in the teachings of Jesus.

But the social gospel is not the whole gospel, just as man's life on earth is not his whole life in Jesus' view. He saw us "under the aspect of eternity." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt: but lay up for yourselves treasures" in the spiritual universe. Accumulate some riches in your soul! "Give us this day our daily bread." Yes! And he meant food for hungry bodies. But "man lives not by bread alone." There are other hungers. "I am the bread of life. . . . Labor not for the food which perisheth, but for that food which endureth unto everlasting life." Jesus assumed immortality in his teachings.

And he assumed it in his life. He dared to live as one would live who was immortal. And so he died. To those who loved him was borne in the glorious and ineffable truth that no chains, no seal, no soldier guard could possibly confine his spirit. Though crucified, he was with them still, and would be, even unto the end.

IV

As a follower of Jesus I am not especially interested in mere continuance. As I contemplate it for myself, I have a good deal of sympathy with George Bernard Shaw: "It would be a dreadful calamity to have this thing named Shaw go on forever pouring out plays by the hundreds and writing books by the score." Mere eternity is not worth the possession unless there is something there worthy to be made eternal. Unless eternal life stands not merely for greater length of life but for a new depth of it, it is at least an open question whether it is really something to be desired or not. But the word I have for you today from the Gospels is of such importance that I feel like shouting it from the housetops. Life is worth something! Measured on the largest scale we can find, life is worth something!

As a follower of Jesus I am not especially interested in searching for physical materializations in hope of bolstering a belief in immortality. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. . . . It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing." In older ages, men may have had to think in terms of tangible bodies in order to conceive immortality at all. But for me the thought that Sir Edwin Arnold expresses in his poem "Death in Arabia" is full of meaning. The spirit of one who has passed beyond is speaking:

> Loving friends, be wise and dry
> Straightway every weeping eye:
> What ye lift upon the bier
> Is not worth a wistful tear.
> 'Tis an empty sea-shell—one
> Out of which the pearl is gone;
> The Shell is broken, it lies there;
> The Pearl, the All, the Soul is here.
> 'Tis an earthen jar, whose lid
> Allah sealed, the while it hid
> That treasure of his treasury,
> A mind that loved Him; let it lie.
> Let the shard be earth's once more,
> Since the gold shines in his store.
>
> . . . . .
>
> I am gone before your face
> A moment's time, a little space.
> When ye come where I have stepped
> Ye will wonder why ye wept;
> Ye will know, by wise love taught,
> That here is all, and there is naught.
> Weep awhile, if ye are fain,
> Sunshine soon must follow rain,
> Only not at death, for death,
> Now I know, is that first breath
> Which our souls draw when we enter
> Life, which is of all life center.
> Be ye certain all seems love,
> Viewed from Allah's throne above;
> Be ye stout of heart, and come
> Bravely onward to your home.

No, it is not arguments this morning that hold me, for I am holden with reverence and awe in the presence of the fact. God has set before us life! Life for the spirit. Life with possibilities of new depths of understanding and of living.

V

What, then, does immortality demand of me? That is my question. Why, I too must live as if I were immortal, as if my fellows all were immortal too. I must carry out the adventure of immortality, acting on the principles of Jesus, here and now. Here and now I must cease exploiting my fellows. Here and now I must cease hating and envying and begin loving. Here I must cease living cheaply and begin living gloriously. Here where I live today, here where I work tomorrow, "in shop or ship or cattlefield," in sickroom or office, in home or in store, here there is another life that I must live, different in its quality and motive from that which ordinarily I and my fellows pursue. The immortal life is now. It does not wait till death, nor does it end with death. I can begin that deeper living now, with Jesus.

In this light, how life ceases to be casual! How many of the things we spend our days on seem trivial! The world *is* absorbing. Behold what man is creating—civilization, with all its accoutrements. And such a civilization! Yet all this will fade.

> The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
> And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind.

This cooling planet will not last always. What then? The world passeth away and all the glory thereof.

What then? "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Is there then that which lies "beyond our bourne of time and place"? We hear a sweet voice saying, "In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. . . . I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. . . . Because I live, ye shall live also."

Lord Jesus, lead us on. Thou hast the way to life that is life indeed. We have no fear, so Thou art there before us. Thou hast blazed a path ahead, on into the eternal country. Thou hast bridged the dark chasm of Death, so often feared by men. Thou hast placed before us Life—glorious, abounding Life—prepared for those who love Thee.

> Onward we go, for still we hear Thee calling.
> Come, weary souls, 'tis Jesus bids you come.
> And through the dark, its echoes sweetly ringing,
> The music of his gospel leads us home.

Where Is Thy God?

By James A. Richards

As with a sword in my bones, mine adversaries reproach me, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? Psalm 42:10.

IT would be interesting to know more about the poet who wrote this. There is no good reason to think that the author was David. We know that his connection with the book of Psalms arose not so much through authorship as through the dedication to him of a collection of Hebrew poetry. To think that David wrote all the psalms would be much like assuming that John Bartlett wrote everything in the invaluable volume of familiar quotations that now bears his name. Moreover, in this great poem there are geographical references that increase the difficulty of taking David as the author. As a result, we can claim no knowledge about the writer except what he himself discloses.

Evidently he was in trouble. It may be that he was in physical exile from his beloved place of worship. It is certain that he felt himself in exile from the great refreshments of religion. Moreover, others felt about him as he felt about himself. They teased him and sneered at him, and he felt as if his very bones were crushed within him. They continually jibed him with the question, "Where is thy God?"

On the other hand, it may be fortunate that we do not know the particular trouble that led our author to write as he did. That fact has made it much easier for a great multitude of other folk in trouble all down the centuries since then to take the poet's word as their very own. It is certain that many are substantially quoting him today. As men look out on our present world many turn to Christians and either in sadness or in glee demand, "Where is thy God?" Many others even more poignantly ask that question of themselves. Well, where is he?

This question, however, immediately poses a more basic one. Moreover, until this more basic question is answered, consciously, or quite as likely, unconsciously, we cannot make much sense out of the poet's question or seek its answer with much hopefulness. This more basic question is, "What do you mean by God?"

DEFINING GOD WITH OUR LIVES

To this more basic question there is a formal answer that may help us on our way and at the same time show why the question is often answered unconsciously. According to this formal answer your God—what you really ought to mean when you say "God"—is that which you actually take to be the center of all things, that which you take as your final point of reference, that on which you actually build your life. According to this answer every sane man is inevitably religious, for every sane man, fully known, will be found to be making some judgment as to what is at the heart of all things, taking something as his final point of reference; electing something on which to build his life. Alas! he may not always himself know what it is. Those who observe him may see more clearly than he what is actually dominant in his life, for in religion as elsewhere we are most of us masters in self-deception, and often fool ourselves more than we fool anybody else.

Thus we may have the man who sings the most spiritual songs on Sunday, but all the rest of the time shows that his own or his family's material well-being is dear to him above all else, is the final standard of all his conduct, is the deepest foundation that determines his every choice. A person may at times deeply thrill to all the ideals of Jesus, and yet with utmost readiness may take the opinions of his neighbors as more important than anything else at all. You can accurately prophesy all his conduct if only you know the mood of his gang, the standards of his set, the temper of his class. A man may call himself a worshiper of the God of all the world, and yet without one thought of the will of such a God may surrender the most vital decisions of his life into the hands of the state, irrespective as to whether that state is Christian or anti-Christ. A man may pray the prayer that takes in all humanity, "Our Father who art in heaven," and yet show as plain as day that that which he takes as the center of all things, the final point of reference, the foundation of his life, is the apparent welfare of his group or of his race or of his economic class.

MAGICAL NOTIONS OF THE DIVINE

Easy it is to answer our question for such persons—among whom all of us are sometimes to be found. Where is thy God? He is in the stock exchange. Where is thy God? He is in the opinion of my set. Where is thy God? He is in Berlin, or in Paris or in London, or in Washington. Where is thy God? He is in the interests of my social or economic group. We once thought that we could run the dividing line between Christianity and paganism as plainly as a geographic boundry. We cannot do that, for the frontier between paganism and Christianity runs right through every one of our own hearts. What do we mean by God?

Still we need to press this question further and in a somewhat different direction. When we do so we shall

uncover a great deal more of the religious confusion of our times. In spite of our long Christian history and training, even devout folk seem often to retain or to revert to an answer to the question what we mean by God that is essentially pagan. You can describe this answer as the magical idea of God, or the aristocratic, authoritarian view of God, or the assumption that there is in the heavens a sort of dictator that we abhor upon the earth. This view stresses what is called the omnipotence of God to the practical exclusion of all else. Hence arises a host of troubling questions. Since God is so powerful, why does he let the wicked flourish, and the nations rage, and the peoples imagine a vain thing? Why do the waves and the billows go over me, and we go mourning

JAMES A. RICHARDS

because of the oppression of the enemy and so many cry for deliverance from the deceitful and unjust man? Why does not the all-powerful God stoop down and mend things now so obviously and terribly needing amendment? Ask where such a God is and it is indeed hard to answer.

But this is not what the mature Christian means by God at all. The mature Christian does not have to doubt the omnipotence of God. On philosophical or religious grounds he may still adhere to that. But he thinks he sees why God does not use his omnipotence.

To Christians, God is not a master mechanic interested in fashioning a perfect machine out of our humanity, wherein every last part shall do his will, whether it wants to or not. Rather is God a great educator wanting each unit to do his will, because each unit sees the truth and freely loves it, and wants to do it. God is a great parent, who does not want his family to be helpless automatons, and who therefore puts his children largely on their own, and tries, not by overpowering physical compulsion, but by the force of his character to win them to see and love and choose the good. He is not seeking a race of puppets, he is seeking a fellowship of free companions. If by his thunderbolts God now struck dead certain colossal men who seem striding across the world for ruin, or by his lightnings touched off certain arsenals whose explosions would wreck the hopes of certain commanders who now seem bent on making Europe into a shambles, or sent a pestilence among those armies, he would indeed be manifesting himself in one kind of power, but would he not at the same time be denying himself as the great educator, the great parent, the great companion, seeking not mechanical puppets for his playthings but free men for his co-workers and companions?

You see in these days we are called to be more Christian, not less. We need to ponder again and yet more deeply that which is so central in our religion—the power of Christ and the power of his cross. I say we need to ponder again the power of Christ who would not turn stones into bread but chose to live on the same hard terms as others, who would not dazzle the world by a safe leap from the temple's pinnacle into the crowd of the street beneath, who would not by a nod to Satan take unto himself all the authority of all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, but who instead sought his kingdom by kindness and patience, by bearing the sorrows of others, by assuming the guilt of the least and of the greatest, by loving his enemies, serving them and suffering for them. I say we need to ponder again the power of his cross, and how it is that while many other empires are now "one with Nineveh and Tyre" that cross is still "towering o'er the wrecks of time."

KNOWING CHRIST, THEN GOD

Only then, when the power of character and the power of patience and kindness and sympathy and sorrow and forgiveness and suffering and service and love has come to be for us the center of all things, the final point of reference, the foundation for our lives, are we prepared even to ask the question, "Where is thy God?"

But then, just to ask the question is to begin to answer it. He is—why, he is everywhere! He is in all evil working for its destruction. Thus these present days are not the obscuring of God but the revelation of God.

"He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored." He is showing us that we can't run even this world on the basis of mechanical power such as that to which in our less Christian moments we sometimes beg him to stoop. "In the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps," in those called to

> A rendezvous with death
> On some scarred slope of battered hill,

in the plunging of fair ships and their trapped innocents into the vast depths of the sea, in the bombed open towns that flame and crumble, while

> Too many peasants fight they know not why,
> Too many homesteads in black terror wait

and all the fairways of human intercourse and friendliness are shut and poisoned, he is teaching us that you

cannot gather figs from thistles or grapes from thorns. You cannot praise as virtue in a government what you condemn as crime in an individual. You cannot have all the policies of the nations tainted by the lust for wealth, display and power and even through times that we call times of peace putting their trust in "reeking tube and iron shard" and thereby ever expect any world fit for men to live in. "Where is thy God?" He is in all the evil of this hour working for its destruction.

WHERE GOD IS FOUND

"Where is thy God?" He is in everything that seeks to overcome evil in his way. He is in every least kindness that you showed yesterday or can manage to show today or tomorrow. He is in every patience that we have learned to show those who irritate or wrong us. He is in everyone who takes the guilt of others as his own cross. He is in every understanding and every love we can give our enemies. He is in every service, be it humble or be it cosmic, seeking a better way for the nations that now wander in darkness lost. He is in every suffering we bear in our faith that they that take the sword shall perish with the sword, that Satan cannot cast out Satan, that the only way to overcome evil is with good, till all the kingdoms and all the dictatorships and all the democracies and all the republics of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign forever and ever, not by the might of a master mechanic, not by the power that curses alike him who wields it and him on whom it falls but by the spirit that envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, seeketh not its own, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, and takes up his cross and follows him knowing that it is more mighty to die in love than to crucify in hate. "Where is thy God?"

HUMBOLDT, the great traveler, describes in one of his books his first experience of an earthquake. He was in South America at the village of Cumana. Suddenly a shock came, and everything beneath him and around him seemed dissolved. The one overmastering impression was, he says, that everything was going, and the things that he had always looked upon as substantial were no longer real. The solid ground was rocking and sinking beneath his feet; the crocodiles ran howling from the rivers into the woods in terror; the very dogs lay panting by his side, unable to bark or scarcely to breathe; the houses, instead of being a refuge for their inmates, were falling in ruins upon the inhabitants, and their screams of dying agony were mingled with the roar of dissolving nature. He looked to the forest, and the trees were falling; he looked to the mountains, and they were tossing like the billows of the sea. Then he looked up, and lo, the sky and the heavens alone seemed stable and unchanging, and he thought "every earthly thing is dissolving, and heaven alone remains unmoved."

The hour is coming when everything you have counted as substantial shall dissolve and disappear, and only the things that are above shall be unshaken and remain. Have you chosen the city that hath foundations and the kingdom which cannot be moved?

A. B. SIMPSON.

The Appeal of the Cross

BY WALTER A. VOSS

THE emblem of Christ's Church is not a star, nor a lily, nor a halo, but a cross. We make much of Christmas and its star of hope. But during the first fifty years of Christianity, Christmas was unknown. But the new religion conquered. Up and down the shores of the Mediterranean men and women were brought under the sway of the Galilean Carpenter. The appeal through which they were reached was not a nativity star but a God-man upon a cross. Down through the ages the church has won its way as its members have gathered before the cross and repeated in all sincerity:

> In the Cross of Christ I glory,
> Tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time;
> All the light of sacred story
> Gathers round its head sublime.

Wherein is discovered the appeal of that rough-hewn beam of Calvary?

I

The cross appeals because it lays bare the heart of God. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." This gift of God is stressed in the Nativity. But that love was not consummated until God hid his face in sorrow as his beloved Son died betwixt the malefactors.

> Yet wouldst thou see, my soul, this truth displayed
> In characters which wondering angels read
> And read, adoring; go, imploring aid
> To gaze with faith, behold the Savior bleed!
> Thy God, in human form! O, what can prove,
> If this suffice thee not, that God is love?

"Mother," said a child one evening as she was being put to bed, "what makes your hands so scarred and twisted and unlike other people's hands?" "My child," said the mother, "when you were younger than you are now, one night I was awakened by the acrid smell of smoke. The house was on fire. My first thought was of you. I rushed to your room and found the flames enveloping your bed. I rushed through the flames to you, beat at them with my hands, and carried you to safety. In doing this, I burned my hands and they have been scarred and twisted ever since." Mother love received the scars in saving a child from the flames! The cross is the scar upon the heart of God which evidences his deepest love for humanity. Even as the child would reverence the burned hand and be drawn to the mother, so men and women are moved when they see the love of God in the sufferer upon the cross.

> I know not how that Calvary's cross
> A world from sin could free.
> I only know its matchless love
> Has brought God's life to me!

II

The cross appeals because it is the rebuke of innocence to sin. Why do the traitorous deed of Judas, the foul spirit of Herod, the craftiness of Caiaphas and the cowardliness of Pilate cause revulsion in our inmost nature? They are judged in the light of the innocence of the cross.

W. M. Clow tells of three students who were on a walking tour in one of the Roman Catholic cantons of Switzerland. Reared in a Christian atmosphere they had been tempted by the pagan license of a life that made little of prayer and smiled at consecration. Walking together they were submitting to one another

Walter A. Voss

arguments for the giving up of some of their earlier simple and devout customs. Then they came upon a rudely carved crucifix by the wayside. At the sight of the cross they fell silent. Its light revealed to them the wrong of that which they had been contemplating. They vowed to maintain the simple life of faith. It was the rebuke of the innocence of the cross to the foul reality of sin.

In the Wiertz gallery at Brussels there is a picture of Judas wandering about after the betrayal had been perpetrated. In the picture he has come upon a group of workmen who, wearied by their labors, have fallen asleep. The light of the moon falls upon their quiet faces. The features of Judas are distorted with evil passions. Then he seems to catch sight of a rude wooden cross lying on the ground which the workmen had been fashioning. So, that is the end of his evil work. Then the price of betrayal begins to blister his hands. He goes back to those who paid him. He pauses in the doorway for a moment, his face haggard and convulsed with an unspeakable despair. With the cry, "I have betrayed innocent blood!" he hurls the thirty pieces down upon the marble floor. Again the rebuke of the cross to sin.

In the midst of the sin of the world stands the cross—innocence rebuking evil. Men beholding that Man upon the Cross catch their breath in hushed amazement as they hear him whisper, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" And broken-hearted, they creep to the foot of the cross and sob out:

> Nothing in my hands I bring,
> Simply to Thy cross I cling.

One of the purest and noblest and saintliest men of the last century was Jerry Macauley. Yet he had been lifted out of the swamp of sin by coming to Calvary. The great temperance reformer, John B. Gough, had a similar experience. The characters in Begbie's *Twice-Born Men* underwent a like change. The innocence of the cross rebuking sin and lifting the sinner up to fellowship with God!

> Upon the cross of Jesus
> Mine eyes at times can see
> The very dying form of One
> Who suffered there for me;
> And from my smitten heart with tears
> Two wonders I confess—
> The wonders of his glorious love
> And my unworthiness.

III

The cross appeals because it is the imperative that moves men and women of the church to serve a needy world. The cross is the eternal proclamation: "They are worth dying for." Who? All men, of all classes, of all races, here and everywhere. Here is the dynamic for Christian ministry to humanity. Here is the vital breath of a regenerated social order. It was the appeal of the imperativeness of the cross that sent William Booth down into the slums of London saying: "From the day I got the poor of London on my heart, and a vision of what Jesus Christ could do for them, I made up my mind that God should have all of William Booth there was." It was this same appeal that sent David Livingstone marching through the heart of Africa having in his heart the vision of Africa redeemed—its black people at the feet of Jesus, its children lifting up young hearts in praise to the Redeemer. Wherever there have been such great souls on fire for God there has been the appeal of the imperativeness of the cross.

Herrick Johnson asks and answers this question: "Did a Gospel of Christian socialism, or a Gospel of Christian ethical precepts, or a Gospel of educational culture ever turn any community upside down, or bring any great multitude to Christ, or make any church a harvesting-place for souls? Never. . . . Nothing but 'Christ crucified' is 'the power of God and the wisdom of God!' "

When the body of Abraham Lincoln was being taken from Washington for the sad journey to Springfield a colored woman lifted her little black child to her shoul-

der and was heard to say: "Take a long look, honey chile, dat man died for you."

Looking to the cross and the Man thereon and recalling the purpose of his Passion, men and women find the imperative that moves them to go and build a new world.

The appeal of the cross is the motivating power in the soul of the Christian church. Does it also motivate us?

O men and women, afar and nigh,
Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?

Democracy Will Win

IT IS a shortsighted individual who passes by the innumerable opportunities in a free society to enrich his life by exchanging experiences and ideas with those of a different racial or religious background from his own. When shortsightedness of this kind is expressed as a social doctrine and children are taught that blood is the basis of superiority, the rights of those who want to expand their personalities to encompass humanity itself are not only denied, but the whole society becomes sick with the arrogance and brutality which naturally flow from this false theory of superiority. . . .

There are those who deprecate the democratic way of life, and even sneer at its realism. They rest their case on the power of physical force exercised by so-called superior persons at the top; they rule the people by dictation and by fear of the sword. We stake our faith on the spiritual power of self-respect and self-reliance among the people. We believe that centuries of history and our own national experience furnish ample evidence that the God-given impulse to be free and the inborn longing for self-development and self-expression cannot be permanently submerged by those few who in times of crisis seize temporarily the power to control and stultify the lives of many.

But this ultimate faith of ours in the triumph of humanity over bigotry calls for positive action, particularly at times when the human spirit is broken by sporadic fanaticism. . . . The answer to barbarism has always been enlightenment. And this is still the answer. We shall measure men of all races and creeds by their achievement, their honesty of purpose, and their humility. We shall not turn our eyes to the darkness of the Middle Ages, for we know that our course toward human solidarity leads to a unity based on moral forces capable of meeting today's and tomorrow's crises.

J. W. Studebaker,
U. S. Commissioner of Education.

For the finer spirits of the world there are two dwelling places; our home-land and the City of God. Of the one we are the guests, of the other the builders. To the one we will give our lives and our faithful hearts; in the other the spirit shall abide. The spirit is a light. It is our duty to keep it dwelling above tempests, to thrust aside the clouds which threaten to obscure it. It is a task not unworthy of those who through the life of the spirit have wider relations with the universe. To build higher and stronger, dominating the injustice and hatred of nations, the walls of that city wherein the souls of the whole earth may assemble.

Romain Rolland.

A Pastoral Prayer

By Harold B. Kerschner

ETERNAL God, our Father, the indwelling of whose spirit is as the coming of the dawn to each new day, we thank Thee that with Thee there is no darkness at all, but that Thou art ever bringing life and immortality to light. We thank Thee for the Easter truth that ours is an endless life; that, though change and decay are all about us, the spirits of the faithful are with Thee; that, abiding evermore in Thee, they go on singing down the ages, breathing upon all the breath of God, and quickening the true-hearted with a deathless and abounding life.

We thank Thee that we follow a Leader who has not been vanquished: who was tempted in all points even as we are and yet was without sin; who climbed the steep ascent of character, through peril, toil and pain; who went out into the night of death alone, and now, having overcome the world, bids us do as he hath done. Help us to remember that nothing that is good can ever die; that, while evil destroys, that which is right vitalizes and maketh alive. May we follow the disclosures of this truth wherever it may lead!

We thank Thee that Thou art placing Thy strength underneath our burden; that Thou dost go with us through the Gethsemanes of our experience—the situations of loneliness, of struggle, of stern duty and difficult choices; that Thou dost climb with us the slopes of Calvary, where crosses must be borne and suffering endured; that Thou dost lie down with us in the slumber of the tomb, assuring us that we may pass through the valley of death and fear no evil. Make our lives sacred in this hour of precious memory by the recollection of Thy nearness to Him who came that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly.

And so, we pray that Thou wilt speak the name of each one, as weeping we stand with bowed heads in the garden of our defeated hopes and loves. Help us to be comforted as we mourn; to bear our burdens manfully; to have the courage and the insight to labor on until Thy Kingdom come, and thus to overcome the errors of life and the terrors of death. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

The Sermon as Drama

By Gerald Kennedy

IN the preface to *Mein Kampf,* Hitler says: "I know that one is able to win people far more by the spoken than by the written word, and that every great movement on this globe owes its rise to the great speakers and not to the great writers." Whether we accept the full implications of this as true or not, the rise of nazism and the rise of Christianity bear witness to an essential element of truth in it. Such a statement from such a man ought to be at once a challenge and a comfort to men who have been called to the "foolishness of preaching." It ought to be a challenge to us to become great speakers for our cause, and it should be a comfort in that it touches our profession with dignity and importance.

It is perhaps a sad commentary upon preachers that we should be in need of assurance on the point of our importance. But too many preachers proclaim by their attitudes that they suffer from inferiority complexes.

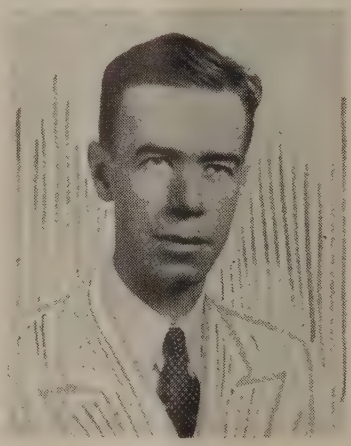
• *Why Some Preachers Are 'Harmless'*

This is largely due, no doubt, to our seeming ineffectiveness. Critics who range all the way from Thorndike, in his study of *Your City,* to sidewalk loafers, tend to regard preachers as rather harmless, well meaning, ineffectual users of pious words. As a matter of fact, nothing much seems to happen when we preach. With certain notable exceptions, preachers do not draw great crowds. Lives are not noticeably changed. Christianity does not start on a new crusade.

In 1840, Thomas Carlyle wrote concerning the preacher of his day: "I wish he could find the point again, this speaking one; and stick to it with tenacity, with deadly energy; for there is need of him yet. The Speaking Function, this of truth coming to us in a living voice, this with all our Writing and Printing Functions, has a perennial place. Could he but find the point again. . . ." This means that we are faced with one of two alternatives. Either speaking has gone out of style, or else we who are modern preachers have lost the point. Since Hitler and his kind refute the first alternative, we must face the second one. Why have we lost the point and how do we go about recovering it?

• *What Modern Sermons Lack*

I do not propose to suggest what the point of our preaching ought to be, so far as its content is concerned. No individual is competent to define for his brethren what the Christian message is. But the trouble is not here. So far as content is concerned, most sermons are not too bad. There is usually good solid stuff in them, and most of them are intellectually respectable. Read the sermons of today and compare them with sermons of the past and they hold their own. So far as practicality is concerned, we excel. And we have our prophets. There is no loss here, but I believe we have to a degree lost our sense of the dramatic in the gospel and in our presentation of the gospel.



Gerald Kennedy

To say that a thing should be dramatic is to be misunderstood by many. For drama signifies acting and a situation that is unreal. It suggests a deliberate trick on the part of the trained orator to carry people away emotionally and make them amenable to his suggestion. It means the abeyance of cool judgment and decisions made on the basis of feeling rather than reason. Or, at best, dramatic preaching is regarded as having as its chief result keeping the people in the clouds with its flights of sentimental imagery. Many would insist that we should have none of this in the pulpit even if we have to sacrifice the crowds. With that, I am quick to say I heartily concur.

• *Drama Is the Truth Of Things*

But this is not drama. Listen to Louis Adamic in the preface to his book, *My America:* "I think, however, that the sense of drama is probably the most important [in approaching truth and understanding]. I believe that the drama of things is the truth of things. To say this in other words: the truth of a thing, condition, situation, or whatever it may be, is the essence of the interplay or interaction of all the factors therein which is the drama thereof. I think that to the extent that one perceives the drama of a thing, one perceives the truth of it. . . . To write truthwardly, then, is to write dramatically." Of course! We do not live in a dead universe. And where there is life, there is drama. Truth is dramatic because truth is continually on the march. It is always necessary that "we must upward be and onward" if we are to keep ourselves abreast of it.

• *Can Doctrine be Dramatic?*

But is there drama in systems of thought and doctrine? Is philosophy not by its very nature limited to the prosaic? Except to a few trained minds, can it be anything but rather laborious reading? And if philosophy is of that nature, how much the more must theology be so! In regard to philosophy, I remember that Mr. J. B. Priestley, English man of letters, says in one of his autobiographical books that the test of any philosophy for him is this question: Is there life in it? If not, he passes it by, but if there is life in it there is truth in it. When it comes to judging the systems of the various philosophers, I suggest that this is a good, general rule-of-thumb principle.

As for theology, Professor Hocking of Harvard has this significant word: "A theory is false if it is not interesting. A proposition which falls on the mind so dully as to excite no enthusiasm, has not attained to the level of truth. Though the words be accurate, the import has leaked away from them and the meaning is not conveyed. Whatever doctrine tends to leave men unstrung, content, complacent and at ease, is a treachery and a deceit. We have to require of our faith not what is agreeable to the indolent spirit but what is at once a spur and a promise."

But all of this merely gives support to something that needs no support. The life of Jesus is a drama that "shines in its own light." If he is the center of our faith, then it makes no difference whether our interpretations of that faith move toward the right or the left, he must still be the center of our preaching. Where

in all literature will you find a faster-moving, more exciting biography than in the Gospel of Mark? As a matter of fact, the artists who have special insights into these matters have found in the Gospels a veritable gold mine of drama. There was something far beyond the humdrum in the life of Jesus; in those amazing stories of his birth, and the moving, complacency-shattering drama of his crucifixion and resurrection. The only reason that our hearts do not burn within us when we read that story today, is that we have allowed our minds to become dulled by the familiar.

How have we ever succeeded in transforming Jesus' flashing, overwhelming insights into the heart of God and the heart of man, into dull platitudes? Dynamic they may be, and disturbing, but they are never dull. Beautiful are his words, but never with a pale, lifeless beauty. On the contrary, they have a beauty that is breath-taking and compelling. And if, to climax the whole thing, Jesus was a revelation of God, that was the most dramatic news that the world has ever heard. If the gospel is true, it is the greatest drama that has ever been played on any earthly stage. That those early Christians who were spreading this story across the Empire sensed the truth of this, is obvious. They were not quiet, pious, dull fellows. They were "these that have turned the world upside down."

• *What Makes a Preacher?*

The preacher, then, must be one who has imagination that pierces through conventional drabness to the dramatic heart of reality. Charles Silvester Horne said that "the supreme qualification for the ministry is a soul aflame." Does that not mean that a man must be vitally alive? The cold, ponderous, aloof mind may make an excellent philosopher or cloister theologian, but he can never be the preacher, no more than the writer of statistical surveys can be the novelist. For the novel, like the sermon, must have life and movement. Wooden figures that seem like marionettes, with someone pulling their wooden limbs, are the inevitable result of the novel written by the man without an adequate sense of drama. Dull sermons that bore and weary the congregation are the results of the same lack on the part of the preacher. Dull preachers are always murderers.

The people who make up a congregation are not academicians who have given up an hour to hear some impractical and weighty matter objectively discussed. They are people who carry burdens that are often too heavy for them. Usually they are worried, and often they are tired. Unless something electrifying happens to them, they will not come very often. And when they do come, many of them have to be made to listen, almost against their will. That is why the movies are so popular. They furnish drama, usually second- or third-rate, it is true. But lives that are starved for something illuminating and exciting will take third-rate movies that move, rather than the drabness of dull interpretations of dead truths.

• *Preaching Must March!*

It need not be thought that this makes the preacher a divine entertainer. The idea of the sermon as drama is rather a criterion by which we may judge what we do. It is a guidepost that will tell us whether we are on the right track or not. If the material does not come to life under our treatment, we have not gone deeply enough or we have not seen the implications of the truth we are teaching. And we may be very sure that if the idea does not kindle our hearts, it has no chance to kindle the hearts of our hearers.

Gifts in this realm will vary, of course. But all of us can develop the power and scope of our dramatic insight. If the lack is too great, we may be great pastors, but we will never be great preachers. For to preach as Jesus did, our words must become alive, and march up and down in the hearts of our hearers. The sermon must be thought of, always, as drama.

The Church Challenges the World

By Albert W. Beaven

THE churches are everlastingly right when they contend that the main trouble with the world lies in the attitudes of men, not in the things which men make or do not make.

We are inclined to be enamored with things, proud that we have invented our machines and that we have obtained control over nature. But we forget at times that these inventions are the very things that cause us most of our troubles, when they are attached to a wrong attitude inside some person. A man in a laboratory learns a secret of chemicals; some other man, with a wrong attitude, rushes off to put this into bombs. Someone in a laboratory finds the germ of a disease for purposes of curing us; another man hastens to learn how to distribute it so as to take the lives of his enemies.

The church has always insisted that the major trouble lies in the heart of man. The world has been inclined to laugh at that; to think that if we could get the right wages, the right schooling, the right health, the right economic system—the right externals, all would be well.

To be sure, the church cannot and should not ignore these important material things, but it is on the right track when it insists that that is not the main trouble.

And the church is also right in its assertion that man cannot find the answer to his troubles in satisfying his own selfish desires. Unless a man is part of a cause bigger than himself, he never finds the satisfaction that makes life worth living. If a man puts himself at the center of his life, he becomes disgusted even though he succeeds. Religion insists that each of us can be related to the great God, and can be conscious of a great purpose in life; and when a man yields himself to that, and develops his powers in the light of that larger purpose, then he finds real and lasting satisfaction.

Today men are saying that smaller purposes will do. They offer the state, the race or the class, but in the end all of these are dangerous substitutes for the real thing; they only precipitate the conflict on a group, rather than on a personal, scale.

In the long run, humanity needs universals, not partials, in the realms of good will, fair dealing, justice, and gracious kindliness, far above race, geography, sex or class.

It is usual to put the church on the defensive and have the world as its critic; today I put the world on the defensive and the church as its critic. Let the church say to the world: "We dare you to face your real disease, and after a sound diagnosis go to the One who alone is able to cure it."

The selfish individual, like many today who strut across the stage of the world's life, will eventually illustrate again the old principle that the purely selfish person allies against himself the forces that will ultimately rout him. Victor Hugo said of Napoleon, when he swaggered across the stage of Europe, that ultimately God got bored with him and said, "Out!" The same will be true of anyone who occupies the same position on the stage today. There is no answer to the riddle of life like the answer: "Life lived under the will of God, for the good of our fellow men." This is the message of religion, and is eternally true. When will we have sense enough to see it?

(From a sermon delivered at the Chicago Sunday Evening Club)

• WHO'S WHO in THIS ISSUE •

REV. HUGH THOMSON KERR *has ministered* at Shadyside Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, Pa., since 1913. Earlier pastorates were in Pittsburgh (Oakland), Hutchinson, Kan., and Chicago. Dr. Kerr was named moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly for 1930-31 and for a time he served as president of the Presbyterian Board of Christian Missions.

Graduating from Colgate-Rochester Divinity School Rev. CHARLES F. BANNING ministered at Delaware Street Baptist Church, Syracuse, N. Y., from 1925 to 1929. His second pastorate was at Richmond Hills Church in New York city. After six years of service there he went to First Baptist Church, Columbus, O., where he now ministers.

Rev. JAMES GORDON GILKEY *has led* the activities of South Congregational Church, Springfield, Mass., since 1917. From 1923 to 1930 he was professor of biblical literature in Amherst College. Dr. Gilkey has written many books dealing with religious problems, among them: *The Certainty of God, What Can We Believe?* and *The Problem of Following Jesus.*

Rev. ALBERT W. PALMER *has been president* of Chicago Theological Seminary during the past ten years, also professor of practical theology. He has ministered at Redlands and Oakland, Calif., at Central Union Church in Honolulu and at First Congregational Church, Oak Park, Ill. Among his books are *Paths to the Presence of God* and *The Minister's Job.*

Before accepting a pastorate Rev. HOLLAND F. BURR was director of religious education in First Congregational Church, Los Angeles, where he was the junior associate of Dr. Carl S. Patton. Later he ministered at the Oneonta Congregational Church, South Pasadena, Calif., but he is at the present time pastor of First Church, Tacoma, Wash.

Since 1928 Rev. JAMES AUSTIN RICHARDS has ministered at the First Church in Oberlin (Ohio). For ten years previously he led the activities of Winnetka Congregational Church, on Chicago's north shore. Earlier pastorates were in Newport, R. I., and Boston.

Rev. WALTER A. VOSS *has for several* years been pastor of the Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer in Omaha, Neb. During his earlier pastorate at Boulder, Colo., he ministered also to the Lutheran students at the State University located there.

Rev. HAROLD B. KERSCHNER *is minister* of the First Presbyterian Church, Poughkeepsie, N. Y.

Rev. GERALD KENNEDY *is minister of* Calvary Methodist Church, San Jose, Calif., and conducts classes in homiletics at the Pacific School of Religion.

TITLES AND TEXTS — What Pulpit Readers are Preaching About

ROBERT T. TAYLOR, First Reformed, Tarrytown, N. Y. "The World Peace That Christians Seek." II Kings 9:22—"And it came to pass when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? and he answered, What peace . . .?"

EDWIN T. BUEHRER, Fellowship Church, Orono, Me. "Opiates of the Soul." Psalm 19:12—"Who can understand his errors? Of unconscious ones hold me guiltless."

PAUL SCHERER, Holy Trinity, N. Y. (at Chicago Sunday Evening Club). "Hopes That Have Root." Rom. 15:13—"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

CLARENCE E. MACARTNEY, First Presbyterian, Pittsburgh, Pa. "I Have the Keys." Rev. 1:18—"Fear not, I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen, and have the keys of hell and death."

BRUCE S. WRIGHT. First Methodist, Erie, Pa. "Freedom and Faith—The American Way." Micah 6:8—"What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

REYNOLD B. BODEN, Church of the Messiah, Los Angeles, Calif. "Christ in the House." Mark 2:1—"It was noised he was in the house."

ROGER EDDY TREAT, Bushnell Congregational, Detroit, Mich. "The Impossible Neutrality." Matt. 12:30—"Anyone who is not with me is against me, and anyone who does not join me in gathering, scatters."

HERMAN D. BERLEW, Methodist, Orono, Me. "Strategic Retreat." Isa. 30:15—"By turning back and by calmness shall you be saved."

GLEN L. RICE, First Presbyterian, Wenatchee, Wash. "Tangible Assets and Intangible Liabilities." Mark 8:36—"For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

LEON M. ADKINS, First Methodist, Schenectady, N. Y. "The Christhood of the Believer." I John 3:2—"Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

AARON N. MECKEL, Faneuil Congregational, Brighton, Mass. "Let's Do the Impossible." Matt. 19:26—"But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

FOR YOUR SERMON AND TEXT

. . . . . .
Title of sermon

. . . . . .
Text used (write out the text)

. . . . . .
Name of minister

. . . . . .
Name of church

. . . . . .
Address

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

The Event of the Month

GRADUALLY, but surely, the Protestant mind of America is come out of the spell of sentimentality in which President Roosevelt concealed the political implications of his appointment of an ambassador to the Vatican. The mind of American Jewry is also beginning to sense the danger to that fundamental guarantee of religious liberty and impartiality under which our Jewish population enjoys full respect and security. There are signs, too, that secular organs, always reluctant to admit into their columns any controversy that may involve the so-called "religious issue," are beginning to see that this is not a religious issue, but a straight-out political one. For a time, the spokesmen of the Protestant churches were inclined to accept the President's Christmas gift, impressed by the Christmas ribbons with which the package was tied, thrown offguard by the pretense of impartiality involved in the writing of simultaneous letters to representatives of Protestants and Jews, and hesitant about examining the gift too carefully lest they might injure a sincere effort for peace. But public opinion is leaving that mood behind. As yet no action has been taken to invest Mr. Taylor with the rank of ambassador, though he has already sailed for Rome. Yet the Pope, taking Mr. Roosevelt at his word, is determined to make him an ambassador willy nilly! He announced to the College of Cardinals that Mr. Taylor is the "*first* ambassador of the provisional [American] embassy at the Vatican." The President's dove of peace thus finds itself stuck in the Vatican's diplomatic fly-paper. American protests will not subside until the President annuls this un-American ambassadorship.

Our *First* Ambassador to The Vatican Sails

The Book of the Month

YOU AND YOUR MINISTER. *By Hampton Adams. The Bethany Press. $1.25.*

I DO not know of any other book that attempts to do what this modest little volume does. It is a book for lay members of the church, suggesting ways in which they may cooperate with their minister in the work which they have called him to do. It assumes a relationship of mutuality between minister and congregation, and is designed to create an intelligent understanding of that relationship. There is great need of such a book. People have wrong ideas about the minister and his function in parish and community. Even those who are most generous and loyal have superficial and erroneous ideas. If they understood the aims and techniques of the pastoral office better they could enhance their minister's efficiency. Dr. Adams takes the laity right into his heart. His appeal: Let the minister *preach,* and let him preach to *you!* is elaborated in terms of the necessity of being in the service regularly and in the right frame of mind. But this is not enough. You must let him *prepare* to preach! His preaching requires preparation and this requires a wide margin of quiet time for study and sermon construction. Do not make him a chore boy, or a trifling socialite, or a fritterer of his time in trivialities. Leave him time to read, to meditate, to study.

A Thought for the Month

ONE of the plainest tokens of our possession of Christian grace will be found in our ability to combine criticism with loyalty. Every group relationship rests upon the loyalty of the members of the group. This is true of a Rotary Club, a lodge, a chamber of commerce, a labor union, a political party, a family, a friendship. It is true even in those groups where loyalty is imposed, as in the state or an army, by the presence of force. Without a high degree of loyalty, police force and martial force would be impotent. Yet the essence of democracy is that it makes a place for criticism of the group by members of the group. Our Christian fellowship rests upon loyalty. This is true of a local church, a denomination, a ministerial association, a Federal Council of Churches. Under Christ, loyalty to the fellowship is of the essence of Christian love. Yet here, too, a place must be made for criticism. Otherwise our Christian fellowship takes the Roman Catholic form of blind obedience. The question is, Can we criticize our church, or any of its agencies, without weakening our loyalty, or carrying our criticism to the point of dividing the church or disintegrating the organization? If Catholicism errs on one side by practically inhibiting criticism, I think Protestantism errs on the other side by too easily involving its loyalties in its criticisms. Hence arises our sectarianism. Hence also arises our chief difficulty in restoring the unity of the Body of Christ. Our differences too easily annul our loyalties. For several weeks I have had to bear the unhappy responsibility of criticizing the Federal Council of Churches for what I believe to be a grave mistake in its handling of the proposed appointment of an ambassador to the Vatican. I have received some letters which assume that I am therefore *against* the Federal Council—some condemning me, others cheering me on! I utterly repudiate the implications of these letters. My loyalty to the Federal Council is not in the least disturbed by or involved in my criticism. It rests upon deeper foundations. Every institution administered by fallible men will make mistakes—even the church itself. Our criticisms should be conceived in loyalty, expressed in love, and informed with the purpose of maintaining the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Criticism and Loyalty

Charles Clayton Morrison

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